

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 016586

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: PANAMANIAN PUBLIC STATEMENTS REGARDING THE NEGOTIATIONS.

REF: PANAMA 0479

FOR THE AMBASSADOR FROM BELL

1. WE REGARD THE REFERENCE TO TORRIJOS' ALLEGED "ULTIMATUM" AS OFFENSIVE AND THE ANNOUNCEMENTS BY PANAMANIAN LEADERS RESPECTING "FINAL STAGE" NEGOTIATIONS AS EXCESSIVE, AND YOU SHOULD SO ADVISE TORRIJOS' "INNER CIRCLE" IN THE MANNER YOU JUDGE APPROPRIATE. WE HAVE SO ADVISED AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ-REVILLA.

2. LARGELY IN ORDER TO COUNTER EXCESSIVE OPTIMISM WHILE AT THE SAME TIME RISING ABOVE PANAMANIAN OFFENSIVENESS, AMBASSADOR BUNKER WILL REPLY TODAY TO A QUERY FROM THE
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ASSOCIATED PRESS AS FOLLOWS. WE UNDERSTAND IT WILL USE

THE AMBASSADOR'S COMMENTS FAIRLY FAITHFULLY IN A STORY TO BE PUT ON THE WIRE TODAY OR TOMORROW.

3. BEGIN QUOTE. SPEAKING GENERALLY: I BELIEVE THE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE BEEN MOVING ALONG MUCH AS THE EXECUTIVE LEADERS IN THE TWO COUNTRIES WISH THEM TO MOVE ALONG: --NOT QUICKLY...NOT SLOWLY...BUT, RATHER, CAREFULLY. CAREFULNESS IS REQUIRED BECAUSE: -- WE ARE NOT ONLY TRYING TO ELIMINATE PAST CAUSES OF CONFLICT; -- WE ARE ALSO TRYING TO BE AS CERTAIN AS WE CAN THAT WE CREATE NO NEW CAUSES OF CONFLICT.

4. SPEAKING MORE SPECIFICALLY: (A) DURING APPROXIMATELY THE FIRST HALF OF LAST YEAR, THE TWO NEGOTIATING TEAMS WERE REEXAMINING THEIR POSITIONS: -- CONSULTING WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LEADERS IN THEIR COUNTRIES; -- AND SEEKING NEW NEGOTIATING GUIDELINES FROM THEIR EXECUTIVE BRANCHES. (B) DURING APPROXIMATELY THE LAST HALF OF 1975, THE TWO TEAMS WERE AGAIN MEETING REGULARLY. (C) FROM THE UNITED STATES' VIEWPOINT, THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED DURING THOSE MEETINGS WAS MOST SATISFACTORY. (D) NOW THAT THE HOLIDAY SEASON HAS PASSED, THE TWO TEAMS WILL RESUME THEIR REGULAR MEETINGS...THE UNITED STATES' TEAM WILL BE GOING TO PANAMA IN THE EARLY DAYS OF FEBRUARY.

5. AS FOR OUR FUTURE PROSPECTS: (A) THE UNITED STATES' TEAM HAS REASON TO HOPE THAT THE PROGRESS WILL CONTINUE TO BE SATISFACTORY, BECAUSE: -- THE TWO TEAMS ARE ALREADY NARROWING THE GAPS BETWEEN THEM ON THE MOST IMPORTANT NEGOTIATING ISSUES; -- AND THE TWO TEAMS ARE DETERMINED THAT THIS BARGAINING PROCESS NOT FALTER. (B) WHEN MIGHT THAT BARGAINING PROCESS BE COMPLETE? I HAVE OBSERVED, OVER SOME YEARS, THAT THE SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATOR IS ONE WHO DOES NOT SPECULATE AS TO WHEN--OR, IN FACT, WHETHER--HE IS GOING TO BE SUCCESSFUL. (C) I WOULD ADD, HOWEVER, THAT I HOPE TO BE SUCCESSFUL THIS YEAR...AND I'M SURE MINISTER TACK HAS THAT SAME HOPE. END QUOTE. ROBINSON

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